

# **Ellipsis in Drama and Novel: A Cohesive Device**

Author: Sara Expósito Gutiérrez

Thesis supervisor: María Ángeles Alves Castro

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University of the Basque Country - Faculty of Arts

Department of English and German Philology and Translation and Interpretation

## Abstract

Ellipsis is one of the devices contributing to the cohesion of both written and spoken discourse. It is the omission of some elements from a clause whose meaning is understood even though they fail to be phonetically realized. This study aims to analyse the use of ellipsis as a cohesive device in Brendan Behan's play *The Hostage* and in James Joyce's composite novel *Dubliners*, trying to identify the similarities and differences with respect to this phenomenon in both genres. As a means to understand the results of this research, first it is essential to understand what ellipsis is, how it works and how it functions as a cohesive device.

The quantitative analysis carried out in this study presents the number of elliptical structures occurring in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners*. These elliptical constructions are classified into three different varieties: nominal, predicate and clausal ellipsis. In the case of predicate and clausal ellipsis, each of their occurrences are further subcategorized. Predicate ellipsis is subcategorized into Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE), whereas clausal ellipsis is divided into occurrences of sluicing and fragment answers. This classification will be conducive to understanding similarities and differences between the different categories and subcategories in both literary works. A play and a narrative have been selected since it is expected there to be differences. The expectation is that ellipsis will be more profusely used in the play as the dialogues are closer to spoken language. On the other hand, it is likewise expected that in the composite novel fewer occurrences of ellipsis will be identified, though ellipsis will be more recurrent in the dialogues of the narrative work than in the narrated parts.

The results obtained in this research have confirmed the cohesive function of ellipsis in written and spoken discourse, contributing to the uniformity of the text by avoiding repetitions or reducing clauses. Moreover, the results obtained show that the ellipsis phenomenon is more frequent in dialogical interaction than in narrative writing in these literary works.

**Keywords:** ellipsis, cohesion, nominal ellipsis, predicate ellipsis, clausal ellipsis

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## 1. Introduction

Cohesion is a fundamental property of written and spoken discourse. Connecting ideas, words and phrases, by applying cohesive devices contributes to the uniformity of the text. Toolan (1998) distinguishes four types of cohesive devices: reference, substitution, conjunction and ellipsis (p. 25). The first three types -reference, substitution and conjunction- consist of adding or substituting words in a clause as a means to maintain the textual cohesion, whereas ellipsis is the only cohesive device which elides elements without replacing them with another clausal element.

This thesis analyses the use of ellipsis as a cohesive device in Brendan Behan's play *The Hostage* and in James Joyce's composite novel *Dubliners*. These literary works have been selected since they represent two opposed literary genres. It is expected that more occurrences of ellipsis may be identified in the dialogues than in the narrated parts of both literary works, and for this same reason, another prediction is that *The Hostage* is going to contain more instances of ellipsis than *Dubliners*. *The Hostage* consists mainly of dialogues, as any other play, though there are narrative parts. On the other hand, *Dubliners* consists mainly of narrative writing although there is a considerable number of dialogues. The opposed characteristics of these two literary works are necessary features for the search of ellipses in drama and novel, supporting and facilitating the purpose of this thesis.

In this study the ellipses occurring in both literary works have been identified and it has been seen that each of these elliptical occurrences contribute to cohesion. After identifying the ellipses in both texts, each of these occurrences has been classified into three main varieties of ellipsis (explained in detail in section 3): nominal ellipsis (omission of elements in a noun phrase), predicate ellipsis (omission of a whole predicate or part of a predicate) and clausal ellipsis (omission of a complete clause except for one constituent). Moreover, one of these categories has been further subcategorized as follows: clausal ellipsis has been divided into sluicing (reduction of a main or embedded *wh*-clause, except for the *wh*-expression) and fragment answers (omission of a complete clause in which a non-interrogative constituent survives). With respect to predicate ellipsis, different structures of VPE have been identified

in both literary works, and therefore these occurrences have been subcategorized into total VPE (omission of the verb, complements and adverbials modifying it), partial VPE (omission of the verb in which at least one constituent of the VP survives ellipsis) and TQ-VPE (omission of the predicate of an interrogative clause or tag-questions).

These occurrences have been analysed and the results obtained from the analysis have been compared as a means to explore if there are any differences or similarities between both genres. Moreover, it has been analysed if ellipsis is more recurrent in the dialogues of both literary works in comparison with their respective narrative parts. The results obtained demonstrate that ellipsis is more profusely used in the dialogues of both literary works than in the narrative parts probably due to the fact that ellipsis is a common feature of spoken language.

This paper is structured in 6 different sections. To understand what ellipsis is, section 2 defines this phenomenon and describes how it is used to give cohesion to a text. Section 3 introduces the three main types of ellipsis identified in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners*, describing each of the main categories and their respective subcategories. Section 4 presents a quantitative analysis of the elliptical constructions identified in both genres. This section is divided into three different subsections: two analyses, one for *The Hostage* and another for *Dubliners*, and a comparison of the results obtained in these analyses. To close this project, section 5 provides a conclusion.

## **2. Ellipsis as a Cohesive Device**

Cohesion integrates words, sentences and paragraphs in the structure of any written or spoken discourse, assisting the flow between each of the elements that contribute to the discourse. In consequence, cohesion, supported by different devices, connects words and utterances together with the purpose of creating a fluent discourse (Toolan, 1998, p. 23).

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is defined as a semantic concept given that it contemplates the relations of meaning that a component in the text may have with another (p. 4). In other words, cohesion occurs when the meanings of two components of the

discourse are dependent on each other. One of these components is known as the antecedent, the unit which presents the meaning relation that is attached to a following unit for the first time in the discourse. On the other hand, the second element is known as the referent, the unit of meaning which points anaphorically to the antecedent. Both the antecedent and the referent share the same meaning relation. The implicit cohesive ties between those units' meaning relations (connections that the readers are able to comprehend) are implemented by the different cohesive devices that support the cohesion of a discourse (Toolan, 1998, p. 34).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) claim that cohesion can be divided into two different categories: lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion (p. 6). Lexical cohesion is supported by cohesive devices such as collocation and reiteration, whereas reference, substitution and ellipsis are types of grammatical cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 6). Reference and substitution are cohesive devices which consist of replacing some elements of a discourse for another clausal item which substitutes the meaning of the component or components which have been replaced. Conversely, the ellipsis phenomenon is the only cohesive device in which the elided items are not replaced and fail to be phonetically realized.

Toolan (1998) describes ellipsis as the omission of items which have already been mentioned in a previous string of words and whose meaning is implicit in the elliptical structure since the elided meanings are retrievable in the given context (p. 27). Both definitions emphasize the importance of an anaphoric element which agrees with the elided element from which the meaning of the omitted item is retrieved. Nevertheless, the theories that Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Toolan (1998) present with respect to the recoverability of the meaning of the omitted components are not as contemporary as other theories such as Merchant's (2001) semantic identity condition<sup>1</sup>. Merchant (2001) suggests that ellipsis is governed by a semantic identity condition. This condition states that as a means to recover the meaning of the elided elements, the antecedent of the elliptical construction must entail the elided element and the elided element must entail its respective antecedent, thus satisfying the semantic identity condition and retrieving what has been omitted in the elliptical structure (Lasnik and

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the semantic identity condition is a theory which belongs to generative grammar. Even if this research paper is not working with this framework, it is worth mentioning this theory since cohesion is a semantic concept, as stated by Halliday and Hasan (1976).

Funakoshi, 2019, p. 22). Ellipsis can only occur when the omitted information can be understood by implementing implicit cohesive ties between the antecedents and the elliptical structures.

There are different varieties of ellipsis. The ellipited components from a discourse can either be found at the nominal, predicate or clausal level (Van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013, p. 702).

### **3. Types of Ellipsis**

The next subsections are devoted to describing the three main categories of elliptical constructions: nominal, predicate and clausal ellipsis. Moreover, the distinctive aspects and subcategories of each of these varieties are going to be illustrated providing examples drawn from the literary works under study.

Note that in the following examples the antecedents are marked in *italics* and the elliptical structures are placed between angle brackets (<>).

#### **3.1. Nominal Ellipsis**

Nominal ellipsis is the omission of elements from nominal phrases' internal structure (Saab, 2019, p. 2). It is the absence of the head noun of nominal groups, and in some other cases the head noun is elided together with some of the modifiers that contribute to the nominal group (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 147) <sup>2</sup>.

A nominal group undergoing ellipsis will always be cohesive since it points anaphorically to a preceding nominal group which is presupposed by the former (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 150). Nominal ellipsis avoids the repetition of nouns which have been previously mentioned, contributing this way to the fluency of the written or spoken discourse. To illustrate this, (1) provides an example of nominal ellipsis.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) the elements that accompany and modify the head noun of a nominal group are known as modifiers (p. 147). These modifiers are determiners, numerals, cardinals, quantifiers, adjectives or relative clauses.

- (1) “The only reason I know for throwing a man out is when he has no *money* to pay.” – “Has he got any <money>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 97)

In (1) two different sentences are seen, one of them containing an elliptical structure in the nominal group. The determiner *any*, which is the modifier of the NP, belongs to the elliptical nominal group which lacks the head noun <*money*>, a gap that needs to be refilled by means of presupposition. The elliptical structure is preceded by its antecedent *money*, an equivalent nominal group that overtly expresses the head noun that has been omitted from *Has he got any?*. Another example of nominal ellipsis is provided in (2).

- (2) “I think he’s what you call a *black sheep*. We haven’t many of them, thank God! but we have a few <black sheep>. . .” (Joyce, 1991, p. 85)

### 3.2. Predicate Ellipsis

Predicate ellipsis refers to the omission of the main predicate of a clause (Van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013, p. 702). Note that predicate ellipsis may involve the omission of just the verb or the verb and some of its accompanying constituents up to the whole VP. Although there are different types of predicate ellipsis, the only variety identified in both *The Hostage* and *Dubliners* was Verb Phrase Ellipsis or VPE. This section defines VPE and provides different instances of this subcategory of predicate ellipsis.

VPE deals with the omission of the verb phrase from a clause together with its arguments (Aelbrecht and Harwood, 2019, p. 4). VPE usually occurs after tensed auxiliaries such as *be*, *have*, *do* or modal auxiliaries (Aelbrecht and Harwood, 2019, p. 4). An occurrence of VPE after a tensed auxiliary is illustrated in (3).

- (3) “Miss Kate and Miss Julia *thought you were never coming*.” – “I’ll engage they did <think I was never coming>.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 126)

The dialogue in (3) shows an elliptical structure after the tensed auxiliary *did* in which the predicate *think* has been elided together with its argument *I was never coming*. The past tense is expressed in the predicate itself by the irregular form *thought*, though in the elliptical



construction tense is expressed by means of the auxiliary *did*. Presupposition by ellipsis is allowed in (3) since the semantic identity condition is satisfied, retrieving this way the elided meanings <*think I was never coming*> from its antecedent *thought you were never coming*.

VPE can also occur after the infinitival marker *to* (Aelbrecht and Harwood, 2019, p. 5). In (4) an occurrence of total VPE after infinitival marker *to* is shown.

(4) “*Go to your room.*” – “Do I have to <go to my room>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 178)

The occurrence in (4), and also the one in (3), are short answers to previous string of words in which the whole predicate is elided, though other instances of VPE are identified in different type of structures such as the instance shown in (5).

(5) “*Get her to the room* or I will <get her to her room>.” (Behan, 1964, p. 178)

These VPEs illustrated in (3), (4) and (5) can also be categorized as Total VPE since the three verb phrases are elided together with their objects. Nevertheless, in some other cases of VPE part of the verb phrase is elided and a constituent is left as remnant, though the surviving constituent may not be part of the antecedent as it can be seen in (6).

(6) “Was somebody *doing something for Ireland?*” – “Wasn’t England <doing something for Ireland>, for hundreds of years?” (Behan, 1964, p. 138)

The predicate ellipsis shown in (6) is an instance of VPE in which the PP expressing duration *for hundreds of years* is overtly expressed in the predicate of the clause. Note that the PP *for hundreds of years* is not part of the antecedent *doing something for Ireland*. One could say that the whole predicate has been completely elided since the surviving PP *for hundreds of years?* is not part of the antecedent. Nonetheless, the truth is that only part of the predicate <*doing something for Ireland*>, *for hundreds of years?* is elided since the PP is an adjunct of the VP. Even if adjuncts are a supplementary component of any predicate, they still are part of it. This type of VPE structures could be classified as partial VPE, though others might not take for granted that the PP is part of the VP.

A third case of VPE is found within dependent tag question structures. A dependent tag question contains a subject pronoun that agrees with the subject of the main clause, a modal or tensed auxiliary which agrees with the verbal group of the clause and inverted polarity in contrast with the main clause (Sailor, 2012, p. 4). A clause containing a dependent tag question is bi-clausal since the tag question has full clausal status, though it is reduced by way of total VPE (Sailor, 2012, p. 7). It should be noted that tag questions undergoing VPE are interrogative clauses attached to an independent clause (Gandón, 2016, p. 363). The omission of the VP in (7) is an occurrence of TQ-VPE.

- (7) “Sure they wouldn’t *send an ordinary Joe Soap to see Monsewer*, wouldn’t they <send an ordinary Joe Soap to see Monsewer>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 103)

### 3.3. Clausal Ellipsis

Clausal ellipsis involves the omission of a whole clause in which a single constituent is left as remnant (Van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013, p. 718). Clausal ellipsis is a general expression that covers different subcategories of this type of ellipsis.

The occurrences of clausal ellipsis occurring in both literary works are divided into the two different subcategories identified among these occurrences: sluicing and fragment answers.

#### 3.3.1. Sluicing

Sluicing is clausal deletion of a complete *wh*-interrogative clause in which the only element that survives the reduction is the *wh*-expression (Vicente, 2019, p. 2). This subsection divides sluicing into two types: reduction of embedded clause and reduction of main clause. The instance of ellipsis illustrated in (8) shows an example of sluicing in embedded clauses.

- (8) *Why did they never play the grand old operas now, he asked, Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia?*  
Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why <they never played the grand old operas now Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia>. (Joyce, 1991, p. 143)

Sluicing can also be found in reductions of the main clause, also known as direct sluices. Direct sluices are fragment questions in which a *wh*-expression is left as the only constituent

in the interrogative structure. This type of structure is usually produced as a means to demand further clarification of the information displayed in the antecedent of the direct sluice (Fernández et al., 2004, as cited in Hardt, 2019). Moreover, direct sluices always meet the following premises: they are built from a *wh*-phrase and they are direct interrogative questions (Ginzburg and Miller, 2019, p. 43). The occurrence in (9) illustrates an occurrence of direct sluice.

- (9) “You’ve got a long night ahead of you, and so has he.” – “Who <has a long night ahead>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 146)

In (9) speaker 1 tells speaker 2 *You’ve got a long night ahead of you, and so has he*, though speaker 2 does not know who *he* is, consequently speaker 2 asks speaker 1 *Who <has a long night ahead>?* as a means to request further information.

### 3.3.2. Fragment Answers

Fragment answers are utterances answering a question in which nearly all the elements that contribute to a clause are elided, leaving a single constituent as the answer to the question (Gengel, 2007, p. 39). They are constituents which replace the *wh*-word of the preceding question. These utterances can be produced to make assertions and can be identified as true or false, in other words, they are usually employed to convey propositional meaning (Hall, 2019, p. 2). In (10) a fragment answer is illustrated.

- (10) “How much *is a plate of peas*?” – “<A plate of peas is> Three halfpence, sir”. (Joyce, 1991, p. 35)

As can be seen in (10), fragment answers mainly occur in dialogues. The dialogue illustrated in (10) shows how <*A plate of peas is*> *Three halfpence, sir* has been shortened leaving a single constituent as the answer to the question. This elliptical structure is an NP fragment answer which is part of the predicate of the elliptical structure, and it conveys in conjunction with its antecedent the proposition that the plate of peas costs three halfpence. The subject <*A plate of peas*> and the verbal phrase *is* are elided from the structure, leaving only the NP *three halfpence* as the answer to the question.

Moreover, (11) and (12) are further examples of fragment answers which differ from the one seen in (10).

(11) “What *drove him half mad?*” – “The treaty <drove him half mad>.” (Behan, 1964, p. 103)

(12) “Where *are they?*” – “<They are> In London, Paris, Milan.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 143)

The instances shown in (11) and (12) show two different positions and two different types of phrases that a fragment answer may be. In (11) *The treaty* is a DP occupying the subject position, whereas in (12) the fragment answer is the PP *In London, Paris, Milan*.

#### **4. Quantitative Analysis: Ellipsis in Literature**

The next subsections are devoted to analysing the results of the search of nominal, predicate and clausal ellipsis and their respective subcategories in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners*. The elliptical constructions have been extracted by reading carefully each of the literary works more than once, and simultaneously each of these occurrences have been classified manually to be able to count the total occurrences of each category and subcategory.

In this quantitative analysis, the occurrences identified in both literary works are going to be classified into nominal, predicate, or clausal ellipsis. With respect to the subvarieties, each of the occurrences are also going to be classified into total VPE, partial VPE and TQ-VPE if they are predicate elliptical constructions, or into sluicing and fragment answers if they belong to clausal ellipsis. The final aim of this analysis is to compare the frequency of occurrence of the different types of ellipsis to see if there are differences and similarities across genres.

##### **4.1. *The Hostage***

*The Hostage* (Grove Press, 1964) is a play written by the Irish playwright Brendan Behan in 1958. As a means to identify the ellipses occurring in the play, it was necessary to read the literary work carefully several times. During the reading, each of the ellipses were typed in a blank document, and then classified depending on what was elided from the structure. This

way, it was easier to count manually how many occurrences belonged to each of the varieties presented in section 3.

The structure of this play follows the general rules of any type of drama. The dramatic work's discourse is divided into the primary and secondary text (Lethbridge and Mildrof, 2003, p. 90). The primary text is every instance of text which is not related with the stage performance, dealing with the dialogues between the different characters or monologues produced by a single character, whereas the secondary text is defined as all the extracts that focus on the stage performance and directions, the titles and the dramatis personae, providing the reader with first-hand information which describes the setting, the characters and how they are going to be presented on stage (Lethbridge and Mildrof, 2003, p. 90).

The table below shows the number and percentages of elliptical occurrences identified in the primary and secondary texts:

<b>Type of Text</b>	<b>Number of Ellipses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Primary</b>	171	96.61%
<b>Secondary</b>	6	3.38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1. Ellipses in *The Hostage's* primary and secondary texts**

The results obtained in table 1 show a significant difference between ellipsis in the primary and in the secondary text. Elliptical constructions are more frequent in the primary text, in the dialogues of the play, than in the secondary text or narrative part in which only 6 occurrences of ellipsis were identified. Note that the extension of the primary text makes for the most of the extension of the text. The instances illustrated in (13) and (14) are two elliptical constructions occurring in the secondary text.

(13) One *door* is guarded by the officer, the other <door> by the volunteer. (Behan, 1964, p. 128)

(14) “*The evening paper, isn’t it?*” He reads <the evening paper>. (Behan, 1964, p. 155)

Although both elliptical constructions shown in (13) and (14) are part of the secondary text of the play, there is a great difference between both instances. The occurrence of nominal ellipsis illustrated in (13) retrieves the meaning of the elided material, *the other <door> by the volunteer*, from a preceding sentence which does also belong to the secondary text, *One door is guarded by the officer*. On the other hand, the instance of nominal ellipsis shown in (14) recovers the meaning of the elliptical construction, *He reads <the evening paper>*, from a preceding sentence that belongs to the primary text, *The evening paper, isn’t it?*. Conversely, there are no elliptical constructions occurring in the primary text that have their antecedent in the secondary text.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the instance illustrated in (14) is more than simply nominal ellipsis. This type of elliptical construction is also known as gapping, a subcategory of clausal ellipsis whose elliptical condition is still being discussed by linguists. In (14), the verb *guarded* and the auxiliary *is* are elided, leaving only the subject *the other* and the PP *by the volunteer* as remnants. After identifying the ellipses occurring in both literary works, only a single instance of gapping was found, so it was not worth creating a section for a single instance of gapping. Nevertheless, it can be seen in (16) that gapping is a subcategory of clausal ellipsis since the auxiliary *is* is included in the deletion:

(15) One door *is guarded* by the officer, the other <is guarded> by the volunteer. (Behan, 1964, p. 128)

The 177 occurrences of ellipsis in *The Hostage* are distributed in the three categories described in section 3. The table below presents the number and percentage of each of the varieties of ellipsis.

Types of Ellipsis	Number of Instances	Percentage %
Nominal	35	19.77%
Predicate	102	57.62%
Clausal	40	22.59%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Table 2. Nominal, predicate and clausal ellipses in *The Hostage***

In Behan's play most of the cases of ellipsis are predicate ellipses. With respect to nominal and clausal ellipsis, the number of each of these categories is very similar, nearly the same number of clausal ellipses and nominal ellipses have been identified in both literary works. Moreover, the number of cases of both nominal and clausal ellipsis is much lower than the number of predicate ellipses.

#### 4.1.1. Nominal Ellipsis

The use of nominal ellipsis in *The Hostage* only represents 19.77% of the total percentage of ellipses. It is the least used among the three varieties. Nominal ellipsis, as seen in section 3, avoids the repetition of nouns in a discourse, as in (16).

- (16) "The badge says he only speaks Irish . . . That badge makes me think he's an officer . . . He has another <badge> to say he doesn't drink." (Behan, 1964, p. 113)

The occurrence in (16) shows how nominal ellipsis avoids the repetitions of the noun *badge* in the discourse. Supported by nominal ellipsis, the text is stylistically better since it contributes to the fluency of the text by avoiding nouns that have been previously mentioned. The cohesion of the text is not disrupted since the meaning of <*badge*> is recoverable by pointing anaphorically to the second mention of the noun *badge*. A second example in which nominal ellipsis contributes to the fluency of the text is shown in (17).

- (17) "What are those pipes for?" – "These <pipes>? To play, of course." (Behan, 1964, p. 140)

In (17) the noun *pipe* could have been repeated two times in two contiguous sentences, though only the first mention of the word *pipe* is overtly expressed on account of nominal ellipsis. Again, the discourse is stylistically better as a result of the deletion of the second mention of the word *pipe*, whose meaning is still retrievable in spite of its elliptical condition.

Although nominal ellipsis in *The Hostage* is mainly identified in dialogical interaction, out of 6 instances found in the secondary text, 5 of them are nominal ellipses. The example in (18) is a nominal elliptical construction occurring in the secondary text.

- (18) Empties pockets, which have many *notes* in them. Offers them to Collette – Collette crosses herself then takes some <notes>. (Behan, 1964, p. 97)

Nominal ellipsis in *The Hostage* is the least used type of ellipsis among the three categories presented in section 3, though it is the predominant variety in the secondary text of the play.

#### 4.1.2. Predicate Ellipsis

Predicate ellipsis represents 57.62% of the total number of occurrences of ellipsis in *The Hostage*. It is the most used among the three different types of ellipsis. Although every occurrence of predicate ellipsis identified in the play are instances of VPE, the table below divides each of these occurrences into total VPE, partial VPE and TQ-VPE (tag questions) as seen in section 3.2.1.

<b>Predicate Ellipsis</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Total VPE</b>	64	62.74%
<b>Partial VPE</b>	2	1.96%
<b>TQ-VPE</b>	36	35.29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3. VPE in *The Hostage***



It can be seen in table 3 that the great majority of occurrences of predicate ellipsis belong to total VPE. There are a total of 64 instances of total VPE in *The Hostage*, and moreover, the majority of these instances are short answers to a preceding string of words. Specifically, out of the 64 instances 52 are short answers such as the ones illustrated in (19), (20) and (21).

(19) “You don’t *mean Monsewer*? – No, I don’t <mean Monsewer>.” (Behan, 1964, p. 98)

(20) “Ah yes, of course, you’ve not *been in Mountjoy or the Curragh glasshouse*.” – “I have not <been in Mountjoy or the Curragh glasshouse>.” (Behan, 1964, p. 117)

(21) “You’ve *heard of A B C D E*, I suppose?” – “Certainly I have <heard of A B C D E>, sir.” (Behan, 1964, p. 158)

The three elliptical constructions above are reduced answers to a previous sentence as a result of the application of VPE, in which the head verb and its arguments are elided. Nevertheless, the other 12 occurrences of total VPE are not short answers to previous strings of words. The example in (22) is a conditional interrogative clause in which the *if*-clause is reduced by means of total VPE.

(22) “And who would *look after him*, in England or Ireland, if I didn’t <look after him>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 93)

Moreover, the instance in (23) is the only occurrence in *The Hostage* containing two VPEs in the same clause.

(23) “He wants a— to *go round the back*, sir” – “Well, he can <go round the back>, can’t he <go round the back>, surely?” (Behan, 1964, p. 131)

The example in (23) shows a sentence containing a total VPE and a TQ-VPE, the only instance following this pattern in *The Hostage*. Both structures are samples of VPE, total or tag question, and both elliptical constructions point anaphorically to the same antecedent, *go round the back*.

With respect to partial VPE, there are only two cases of this type of VPE in *The Hostage*. In the two elliptical constructions shown in (24), which was already illustrated in section 3.2.1, and (25) a constituent is left as remnant, though it is not part of the antecedent.

(24) “Was somebody *doing something for Ireland?*” – “Wasn’t England <doing something for Ireland>, for hundreds of years?” (Behan, 1964, p. 138)

(25) “Yeah, I’ve *had a real good time*, I have <had a real good time>, better than the square bashing.” (Behan, 1964, p. 169)

Note that in (25) *better than the square bashing* is treated as an apposition, and for this reason it is classified as an occurrence of partial VPE.

Furthermore, with regard to tag questions, from 102 occurrences of VPE identified in the play, 36 of them correspond to TQ-VPE. The high number of this type of predicate ellipsis is a consequence of the extension of the primary text, which focuses on dialogical interaction as already mentioned. All the TQ-VPE follow the same pattern that the examples in (26) and (27) do.

(26) “Well, I might *have been looking for the in and the out*, mightn’t I <have been looking for the in and the out>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 131)

(27) “You haven’t *got much time*, have you <got much time>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 175)

The examples shown in (26) and (27) together with the rest of the TQ-VPE identified in the literary work occur in dialogical interaction. In general, nearly all the occurrences of predicate ellipsis are part of the primary text of the play. Nonetheless, the following total VPE is the only predicate ellipsis occurring in the narrative part or secondary text of *The Hostage*.

(28) “If you will *put it on*, Teresa” – She does <*put it on*>. (Behan, 1964, p. 149)

It can be seen in (28) that the elliptical structure *She does* <*put it on*> is part of the secondary text and points anaphorically to its antecedent *put it on* which is part of the primary text.

It is not surprising that the majority of the predicate ellipses in *The Hostage* occur in dialogical interaction, since a play is aimed to be performed and, for this reason, dialogues are predominant in contrast with the narrative part. Predicate ellipsis is common in spoken language and, for this reason, it was expected that a vast number of occurrences of this type of ellipsis would be identified in *The Hostage*.

#### 4.1.3. Clausal Ellipsis

Clausal ellipsis represents 22.59% of the total number of ellipses in Behan’s play. Although it is not the least used variety of ellipsis, its percentage of occurrences in contrast with predicate ellipsis is lower. This variety of ellipsis has been divided into two different subcategories: sluicing and fragment answers. The following table shows the number and percentage of each of these subcategories.

<b>Clausal Ellipsis</b>	<b>Number of Ellipses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sluicing</b>	13	32.50%
<b>Fragment answers</b>	27	67.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4. Sluicing and fragment answers in *The Hostage***

The most common subvariety of clausal ellipsis in the play are fragment answers. It can be seen in table 4 that there is a considerable difference between the number of sluices and the number of fragment answers identified in the literary work. In the case of sluicing, all the occurrences in the play are direct sluices, interrogative structures requesting additional information.

(29) “But *I was sorry for him!*” – “Why <were you sorry for him>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 96)

(30) “Something’s *happened.*” – “What <has happened>?” (Behan, 1964, p. 121)

All the sluicing occurrences in the play share the same characteristics with the ones presented in (29) and (30). Therefore, all the sluices identified in *The Hostage* are reductions of the main clause in which the *wh*-expression is the only constituent left as remnant. On the other hand, there are no instances of sluicing in which the embedded clause is reduced as seen in section 3.3.1.

Furthermore, fragment answers represent 67.50% of the total number of clausal elliptical constructions. It is the most common subvariety of clausal ellipsis contributing to the cohesion of the dramatic work. From 40 occurrences of clausal ellipsis, 27 correspond to fragment answers such as the ones in (31) and (32).

(31) “Who the hell *was that?*” – “<That was> My mother.” (Behan, 1964, p. 115)

(32) “What language *is she talking?*” – “<She’s talking> Italian.” (Behan, 1964, p. 161)

As mentioned in section 3, every occurrence of fragment answers appears in dialogical interaction. The interrogative clauses preceding the fragment answers illustrated in (31) and (32) are non-elliptical constructions to which the clausal elliptical constructions point anaphorically. Other occurrences of fragment answers are preceded by another elliptical construction, as can be seen in the following example.

- (33) “Do you think *they will hang him?*” – “Who <will they hang>?” – “<They will hang> the boy in Belfast.” (Behan, 1964, p. 92)

The dialogical interaction presented in (33) illustrates two different elliptical constructions. The fragment answer, *the boy in Belfast*, does not point anaphorically to the question that precedes it as seen in other fragment answer elliptical structures. The interrogative question preceding this fragment answer is a direct sluice, *Who <will they hang>?*, an elliptical construction from which the fragment answer is not able to retrieve the meaning of the omitted elements. Both elliptical constructions in (34), the direct sluice and the fragment answer, need to point anaphorically to the initial non-elliptical interrogative clause *Do you think they will hang him?*

Clausal ellipsis has only been identified in dialogical interaction. This does not mean that it is not possible to find an instance of clausal ellipsis in the secondary text of a play, though in *The Hostage* only nominal ellipses and a single instance of predicate ellipsis have been identified.

#### **4.2. *Dubliners***

The collection of short stories *Dubliners* (Dover Thrift Editions, 1991), also known as a composite novel, was written by the Irish author James Joyce between 1904-1907 and published in 1914. As in the case of *The Hostage*, the composite novel was read several times and the text was searched for cases of ellipsis. The second step, as done with the play, was to observe which categories represented the occurrences identified in the literary work, and then which subcategories represented the instances belonging to the three main varieties of ellipsis presented in section 3.

One of the most distinctive aspects of every novel is the use of the narrator, who thoroughly describes the characters, the plot or the setting. In *Dubliners*, the narrative part is significantly longer in comparison with the dialogues. Even if the extension of the dialogues is not short, the dialogical interaction in the composite novel is briefer in comparison with the narrative

text. This composite novel's narrated parts cover nearly 70% of the literary work, whereas 30% of the text are dialogues.

With respect to ellipsis, the phenomenon has been found both in the narrative and in the dialogues of this composite novel. The following table shows the number and percentage of the ellipses identified in the two different types of discourse.

<b>Type of Text</b>	<b>Number of Ellipses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Narrative</b>	37	28.24%
<b>Dialogues</b>	94	71.75%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5. Ellipses in *Dubliners*'s narrative writing and dialogues**

It can be seen in table 5 that ellipsis is more common in the dialogues than in the narrative part. Out of 131 elliptical constructions, 94 were part of the dialogues, whereas the remaining 37 occurrences are part of the narrative part. It is worth noting that the majority of the ellipses in the narrative text are occurrences of nominal ellipsis. From 37 occurrences of ellipsis in the narrative part, 35 of them are nominal elliptical constructions and the two remaining occurrences are a predicate elliptical construction and a clausal elliptical construction.

(34) Little Chandler pushed one *glass* towards his friend and took up the other <glass> boldly.

(Joyce, 1991, p. 51)

(35) Could he not *keep his tongue in his cheek*? . . . A man with two establishments to keep up, of course he couldn't <keep his tongue in his cheek> . . . (Joyce, 1991, p. 60)

- (36) Why *did they never play the grand old operas now*, he asked, *Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia*?  
Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why <they never played the  
grand old operas now *Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia*>. (Joyce, 1991, p. 143)

The occurrences illustrated in (34), (35) and (36) are instances of the three varieties of ellipsis in the narrative text. In (34), since the noun <*glass*> has been elided from the nominal phrase, it is an occurrence of nominal ellipsis preceded by the adjective *other*. In (35), the whole predicate <*keep his tongue in his cheek*> fails to be phonetically realized and is preceded by the modal auxiliary *could not*, therefore, it is an instance of predicate ellipsis. The last occurrence, (36), has already been illustrated in section 3.1.1 since it is the only clausal elliptical construction in *Dubliners* occurring in the narrative part.

The following table illustrates the number of occurrences of nominal, predicate and clausal ellipsis in *Dubliners*.

<b>Types of Ellipsis</b>	<b>Number of Instances</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Nominal</b>	52	39.69%
<b>Predicate</b>	35	26.71%
<b>Clausal</b>	44	33.58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Table 6. Nominal, predicate and clausal ellipsis in *Dubliners***

The percentages of the three varieties of ellipsis shown in table 6 are similar, though nominal ellipsis prevails over clausal and predicate ellipsis. Nominal ellipsis is the most used variety in *Dubliners* in comparison with the other two. Moreover, clausal ellipsis and predicate ellipsis are not as frequent as nominal ellipsis. In the case of clausal ellipsis, there are more instances in the composite novel than occurrences of predicate ellipsis, though it is less used than nominal ellipsis. Predicate ellipsis, on the other hand, is the least frequent variety of ellipsis in this literary work.

### 4.2.1. Nominal Ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis represents 39.69% of the total number of ellipses identified in this literary work. The omission of head nouns in *Dubliners* has been identified both in the dialogues and in the narrative text. The following occurrences show two elliptical constructions occurring in the two different types of text.

(37) “For the love of God, Jack, bring us a bit of *coal*. There must be some <coal> left.”

(Joyce, 1991. p. 82)

(38) He said that the committee had made a mistake arranging for four *concerts*: four

<concerts> was too many. (Joyce, 1991, p. 96)

The instance shown in (37) is part of a dialogue, whereas (38) is part of the narrative text. With respect to the type of text, there is a great difference between the number of nominal ellipses identified in dialogical interaction or in the narrative part. In *Dubliners*, a total of 52 nominal ellipses were identified, 35 of them occurring in the narrative part whereas the remaining 17 occur in the dialogues.

After identifying the nominal elliptical constructions occurring in *Dubliners*, it seems that nominal ellipsis is more recurrent in the narrative part than in the dialogues. The great number of nominal ellipses in the narrative part of *Dubliners* results from the descriptive style of this composite novel's narrated parts which need to be supported by nominal ellipsis as a means to avoid repetitions of nouns.

### 4.2.2. Predicate Ellipsis

Predicate ellipsis is the least frequent variety among the three different categories of ellipsis, representing 26.71% of the total number of elliptical constructions. As done in section 4.1.2, the 35 instances of predicate ellipsis are going to be divided into total VPE, partial VPE and TQ-VPE in the table below.



<b>Predicate Ellipsis</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Total VPE</b>	18	51.42%
<b>Partial VPE</b>	0	0%
<b>TQ-VPE</b>	17	48.57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 7. VPE in *Dubliners***

The results presented in table 7 show that there are no occurrences of partial VPE, the only predicate ellipses identified in this literary work are instances of total VPE and TQ-VPE. Moreover, the number of total VPEs and TQ-VPEs are nearly equal, though the percentage of total VPE is 3 points higher. Furthermore, the majority of the instances of total VPE are short answers to a previous question, such as the occurrences in (39) and (40).

(39) “Have you *seen Paris*?” – “I should think I have <seen Paris>!” (Joyce, 1991, p. 59)

(40) “Did you *call on Grimes*?” – “I did <call on Grimes>.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 81)

The instances illustrated in (39) and (40) occur in a spontaneous speech between two or more characters of the novel. The majority of the total VPEs in *Dubliners*, 11 out of 18, follow the same structure as the instances in (39) and (40). It is a very common structure in this literary work in which an elliptical structure produced by a character points anaphorically to the antecedent produced by another character. Furthermore, the remaining 7 instances of total VPE are not reduced answers to a previous string of words. The occurrences in (41) and (42) are part of two coordinated clauses identified in the dialogues of the literary work.

(41) “Tonight even, he wanted me to *put them on*, but I wouldn’t <put them on>.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 129)

- (42) “There was no row . . . only she wanted me to *go for a trip to the west of Ireland* and I said I wouldn’t <go for a trip to the west of Ireland>.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 137)

Moreover, there are 17 occurrences of TQ-VPE in *Dubliners*. All the instances were identified in dialogical interaction, since tag-questions mainly occur in spoken discourse, as can be seen in the occurrence in (43).

- (43) “But you will *come*, won’t you <come>?” (Joyce, 1991, p. 135)

The elliptical construction in (43) is a dependent tag-question reduced by means of VPE. Nevertheless, although the vast majority of tag questions are reductions of the predicate of a dependent tag-question, as the one in (43), other instances of TQ-VPE may occur as reduction of the predicate of a main clause. The following TQ-VPE’s predicate has been elided from a main clause.

- (44) “You might *have some sense of decency*.” – “Might I <have some sense of decency>, indeed?” (Joyce, 1991, p. 102)

The elliptical construction illustrated in (44) is the only tag question occurring across sentences and as a main clause. The only difference in contrast with the rest of the tag questions is that the subject of the elliptical construction *you* does not agree with the antecedent’s one *I* since the clauses are produced by two different characters. In (44), as in any other tag question containing a VPE, the elliptical construction <*have some sense of decency*> points anaphorically to its antecedent *have some sense of decency* as a means to retrieve the meaning of the elided verb and its arguments.

Predicate ellipsis is the least used variety in *Dubliners*, though its use is frequent in the dialogues of this literary work. With respect to the narrative part of the composite novel, there is only a single instance of predicate ellipsis (already shown in section 4.2), which proves that predicate ellipsis in *Dubliners*’ narrative part is not a common device.

### 4.2.3. Clausal Ellipsis

Clausal ellipsis represents 33.58% in total percentage of elliptical constructions in *Dubliners*. This variety of ellipsis is not the most frequent, nor the least used among the three main categories of ellipsis presented in section 3. The table below shows the number and percentage of each of the subcategories of clausal ellipsis: sluicing and fragment answers.

<b>Clausal Ellipsis</b>	<b>Number of Ellipses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sluicing</b>	12	27.27%
<b>Fragment answers</b>	32	72.72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 8. Sluicing and fragment answers in *Dubliners***

Table 8 shows that there is a great difference between the number of occurrences of sluicing and the number of fragment answers identified in the literary work. Sluicing in *Dubliners* is not a very common elliptical construction and, moreover, the majority of the sluicing occurrences are reductions of the main clause. There are 12 instances of sluicing occurring in *Dubliners*, 11 of them being reduction of the main clause and a single one as reduction of the embedded clause. The occurrences shown in (45) and (46) represent the two different sluicing structures identified in this literary work.

(45) *Why did they never play the grand old operas now, he asked, Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia?*  
Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why <they never played the grand old operas now Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia>. (Joyce, 1991, p. 143)

(46) “*That’s the rule of the order*” – “Yes, but why <is that the rule of the order>?” (Joyce, 1991, p. 145)

The instance in (45), which was already illustrated in section 3.3.1, is an instance of reduction of the embedded clause. On the other hand, the instance in (46) is a direct sluice or reduction

of the main clause. Moreover, given that direct sluices are direct interrogative structures, some occurrences lead to elliptical answers in which a single constituent is left as remnant, that is to say, they lead to fragment answers as can be seen in the following occurrence.

- (47) “Well, your old friend *is gone*, you’ll be sorry to hear” – “Who <*is gone*>?” – “Father Flynn <*is gone*>.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 2)

In (47) the two subvarieties of clausal ellipsis are illustrated: sluicing and fragment answers. The instance shown in (48) contains a direct sluice *Who <is gone>?* and an instance of fragment answers *Father Flynn <is gone>*. These elliptical constructions contribute to the fluency of the text, eliding elements whose meanings are recoverable. Nonetheless, not every fragment answer is preceded by a direct sluice. The fragment answers shown in (49) and (50) are elliptical structures preceded by a non-elliptical interrogative clause.

- (48) “What age *is he*?” – “<He is> nineteen.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 79)

- (49) “Who’s *playing up there*?” – “Nobody <*is playing up there*>.” (Joyce, 1991, p. 186)

Fragment answers in *Dubliners* consist of 32 occurrences similar to the ones shown in (48) and (49), representing 72.72% of the total number of clausal ellipses. It is the most common clausal elliptical construction in this literary work. There are no instances of fragment answers in the narrative text of the novel as they are dialogical elliptical constructions.

Clausal ellipsis in *Dubliners* only occurs in dialogical interaction, there are no clausal elliptical constructions in the narrative text of this composite novel. It is the variety of ellipsis with more occurrences in the dialogues of *Dubliners* in contrast with the other two categories. Nonetheless, this does not mean that clausal ellipsis cannot occur in narrative writing, though in this literary work it is not a recurrent device in the narrative part.

### **4.3. A Comparison of Ellipsis in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners***

First, before comparing the results obtained in the search for ellipses in both literary works, it is necessary to know the number of pages of each of the works. *The Hostage* has 101 pages,

whereas *Dubliners* has 152 pages. In the case of the narrative work, *Dubliners* was selected taking into consideration that the number of pages was higher in comparison with *The Hostage*'s extension, since it was expected to find more instances in dialogical interaction than in the narrative of both works.

As mentioned above, *The Hostage* has 101 pages in length and a total of 177 elliptical constructions, whereas *Dubliners* has 152 pages in length and a total 131 occurrences of ellipsis. In spite of the difference in the number of pages, more occurrences of ellipsis have been identified in the play than in the composite novel. According to Frederking (1993), elliptical constructions in dialogues are numerous, causing a briefer and more natural communication (as cited in Hardt, 2019). Considering Frederking's statement, the reason why *The Hostage* contains more occurrences of ellipsis than *Dubliners*, in spite of being shorter in length, is because ellipses are an essential feature of spoken language. On the one hand, *The Hostage* is a play, and as any other play consists primarily of dialogues. On the other hand, *Dubliners* does not contain such a vast number of dialogues in contrast with the play. It consists mostly of descriptive writing, though there is a considerable number of brief dialogues.

With respect to the results obtained in the analyses, in *The Hostage* predicate ellipsis is the variety of ellipsis that predominates. Specifically, total VPE is the variety with more occurrences in the dramatic work. As already mentioned, short answers to previous declarative or interrogative clauses from which the verb and its arguments are elided are the most recurring elliptical structures in the play. The constant interaction between characters conjoined with the natural and brief style of this dramatic work, allow for these types of elliptical occurrences. Moreover, the least common category of ellipsis in the play is nominal ellipsis, though the use of clausal ellipsis is not significantly higher in contrast with the former.

Conversely, in *Dubliners* nominal ellipsis is the most common elliptical structure among the three categories presented in section 3. It has been already mentioned that a great number of occurrences of nominal ellipsis in this novel are part of the narrative text, whereas only a few are identified in the dialogues. The repetition of nouns in narrative writing is avoided by

nominal elliptical constructions which support the fluency of text without affecting the cohesion of the discourse. Furthermore, the least used category of ellipsis in this composite novel is predicate ellipsis, which is the most used variety in *The Hostage*. It is not surprising that predicate ellipsis is predominant in the play, but not in the narrative writing. Nearly all the instances of VPE in *Dubliners* were applied in dialogical interaction as short answers or TQ-VPE as in *The Hostage*, though the difference in the number of dialogues between both genres results in fewer predicate ellipses in the narrative work.

Additionally, one of the predominant similarities found in the results of both analyses is the use of clausal ellipsis in both genres. They are similar in number, although *Dubliners* contains a few more clausal elliptical constructions. With regard to the subvarieties of clausal ellipsis, fragment answers are the most common occurrences of clausal elliptical constructions in both literary works, contributing to a concise and natural dialogical interaction in both works. Furthermore, nearly all the sluicing occurrences identified in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners* are direct sluice structures, and therefore they contribute to the dialogical discourse of both literary works. Only a single instance of reduction of the embedded clause has been identified in *Dubliners*' descriptive writing.

Another similarity is that nominal ellipsis is the category with more occurrences in the narrative part of both literary works. The results obtained prove that nominal ellipsis is more common in the narrative part of *The Hostage* and *Dubliners* than predicate and clausal ellipsis. In the case of predicate ellipsis, only two occurrences were found in narrative writing, one in *The Hostage* and another in *Dubliners*. With respect to clausal ellipsis, only a single instance occurring in the narrative writing of *Dubliners* was identified during this research.

To close this section, it is worth mentioning that partial VPE is nearly nonexistent in both literary works. Both literary works present a preference for eliding complete predicates from a clause, rather than leaving a predicate argument or arguments as the remnants of the elliptical structure.

## 5. Conclusion

This project has searched for ellipsis cases in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners*, and it has been proven ellipsis is a necessary device as a means to maintain textual cohesion, and more specifically, grammatical cohesion. It has been stated that cohesion occurs when the meaning of two components (the antecedent and the referent) of a written or spoken discourse are dependent on each other. As for ellipsis, it also connects the meaning of two different elements (the antecedent and the elliptical construction) of the text which are also dependent on each other. The examples illustrated in this project prove this statement, and therefore they prove that ellipsis is a cohesive device supporting the grammatical cohesion of both *The Hostage* and *Dubliners*.

With respect to the frequency of the use of ellipses in the two literary works, the initial expectation was that there would be more cases of ellipsis in the play than in the composite novel since a play is expected to recreate spoken language. Moreover, another expectation was that ellipsis would be more recurrent in dialogical interaction than in the narrative parts of both genres. After identifying the elliptical constructions in the two literary works, the results obtained prove that these previous expectations were right. Ellipsis is more frequent in *The Hostage* in comparison with the number of ellipses identified in *Dubliners*. As mentioned, a play consists mainly of dialogues, and therefore the majority of the elliptical constructions identified in the play under study occur in the dialogues, though a few instances have been identified in the secondary text or narrative part. In the case of *Dubliners*, there are fewer dialogues and more narration, and for this reason the number of ellipses is lower in contrast with the use of ellipsis in the dramatic work. Nevertheless, the great number of ellipses occurring in this composite novel have also been identified in dialogical interaction, though the number of instances in the narration is not as low as *The Hostage*'s use of ellipsis in the secondary text. Therefore, ellipsis is predominant in the dialogues of the two literary works.

Moreover, there was no initial expectation with regard to the categorization and subcategorization of the elliptical constructions, though the results obtained in the analysis

show that there are differences and similarities between the two works. In the case of predicate ellipsis, it was the most used in *The Hostage* and the least used in *Dubliners*. Nonetheless, it has been seen in the obtained results that predicate ellipsis is more recurrent in dialogical interaction of both literary works, which is the reason why this type of ellipsis is predominant in the play. Moreover, the majority of the predicate ellipses in both works were occurrences of total VPE. Note that the majority of total VPEs in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners* are short answers to a previous declarative or interrogative sentence, creating a more natural and concise spoken discourse. The results obtained show that predicate ellipsis tends to occur in dialogical interaction and to create a briefer and more natural communication.

In the case of clausal ellipsis, it is not the most used, nor the least used category of ellipsis in either *The Hostage* or *Dubliners*. As in predicate ellipsis, clausal ellipsis is mainly identified in dialogical interaction. The sluicing cases identified in both genres are direct sluices occurring in dialogical interaction, though in *Dubliners* a single instance of sluicing as reduction of the embedded clause has been identified in the narrative text. As for fragment answers, they are reduced answers to a previous interrogative clause, so it can only occur in dialogical interaction. Moreover, the majority of the clausal elliptical constructions in the play and in the narrative are occurrences of fragment answers.

Furthermore, nominal ellipsis is the least used variety of ellipsis in *The Hostage* and the most used in the *Dubliners*. Nevertheless, the use of nominal ellipsis in the two literary works is similar. Both in *The Hostage* and *Dubliners* the majority of the ellipses identified in the narrative part are nominal elliptical constructions which avoid the repetitions of nouns. Narration in contrast with dialogues tends to be more descriptive, which is the reason why nominal ellipsis is predominant in the narrative parts, as a means to avoid the repetition of head nouns whose meaning is recoverable and to support the flow of the narration. Moreover, since *Dubliners* consists mainly of narrative text, this is also the reason why nominal ellipsis is the predominant category of ellipsis in the composite novel.

In general terms, it cannot be concluded that one of these three main categories is predominant in every play or in every novel, these results have only shown that predicate ellipsis is the most used in *The Hostage* and nominal ellipsis in *Dubliners*. Nonetheless, it can



be concluded that predicate ellipsis together with clausal ellipsis are recurrent occurrences in dialogical interaction, whereas nominal ellipsis, although it can be identified in dialogical interaction, tends to occur in the narration of a discourse. This research project has proven that elliptical constructions are essential structures contributing to the uniformity of a discourse.

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